Wiley Elementary

Family Friendly Walk Through Report

August 2012

Introduction

What is a Family Friendly Walk Through?

The purpose of the Family Friendly Walk Through (FFWT) is to assess how welcome families are in your school and how welcome families are in the learning process. CAFÉ staff members completed a FFWT of your school on May 7th, 2012. The FFWT included: (1) a physical walk through; (2) a review of printed material; (3) a review of the school's web site; (4) a "shopper call;" (5) an interview the building administrator; (6) a survey of school staff; and (7) a survey of parents.

This FFWT report is designed to help your school have a richer conversation about how welcome families are in your school and how welcome families are in the learning process. The report includes ratings, commendations, and recommendations for 4 different goal areas—Communication, Information, Participation, and Welcoming.

Goal 1—Welcoming

The **Welcoming** Goal helps you know if your parents feel they belong on the school campus. Here are the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
Parent Visits	Procedures are in place to accommodate parent visits to the school	5
Making Parents Comfortable	School personnel help parents to feel comfortable	7
Respect	Parents' culture and language are respected	3
Appearance	The school is physically attractive	2

Goal 2—Communication

The **Communication** Goal helps you know if you have systems in place for home-family communication that are inviting, useful and set up for two-way communication. The following table lists the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
Nature of the Contact	Contact between schools and families is frequent, comfortable, and two-way	11
Ease of Use	Written and oral communication is clear and comprehensible	4
Opportunities	Meetings and events are scheduled regularly, widely advertised, and well attended	2
Documents & Website	Print information is available, attractive, useful, and family/culturally friendly	4

Goal 3—Information

The **Information** Goal helps you know if your families receive the information they need in order to function as an integral part of their child's school. Here are the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
School Resources	The school provides resources and materials to help families learn about school goals, policies, and procedures	8
Programs and Procedures	The school has programs and procedures to inform families about their child's classroom and activities	7
Student Performance	Families are kept current on their child's school performance	4
Involving Parents with Achievement	The school has programs and procedures to involve parents with their child's academic achievement	6
Connecting Parents with Community Services	The school has programs and procedures to inform families about available community assistance	3

Goal 4—Participation

The **Participation** Goal helps you know if your family participation programs invite involvement, value parents as key resources, and engage the entire school community. The following table lists the indicators for this goal area along with the number of items used to determine the rating for each indicator.

Indicators	Definition	# of Items
Supporting Parent Ideas	Individuals and existing documents support parent input and ideas	5
Working Together	Parents and teachers meet and work together	7
Learning & Volunteering Opportunities	Schools provide parents with education and volunteering options	2
Valuing Parent Knowledge	Parents are valued as an education community resource	7

Rating System

Each indicator received a rating of High Quality, Emerging or Low Quality based on the average score of the items associated with each indicator.

Rating	Range
High	2.75 to 3.00
Emerging	2.00 to 2.74
Low	1.00-1.99

Contact Information

Ron Mirr   319.430.4315   ron@caferesources.com   http://caferesources.org

Summary

Your Scores

Goal	Score	Rating
Welcoming	2.02	Low
Communication	2.53	Emerging
Information	2.28	Low
Participation	1.96	Low
Overall Score	2.20	Emerging

Survey Information

- 16 **staff** completed the online survey

- 42 **families** completed the parent survey

School Visit Highlights

- The Wiley school campus was very well maintained. It is clear that Wiley staff and administration take great pride in the physical appearance of the building and grounds. Feedback from both parents and teachers indicates that Wiley is successful at providing parents with information and social and celebratory experiences. Wiley Elementary is very successful at involving parents in the school.

Recommended Next Steps

To take your family engagement practice from involving parents in the school to engaging parents in student learning, CAFÉ recommends the following:

- Structured professional development for all staff (certified and non-certified) that helps staff members understand:
  - **Why** family engagement matters and how family engagement efforts can positively influence student learning;
  - **What** specific practices affect student academic progress; and
  - **How** Wiley Elementary can create a school-wide culture which promotes a range of family engagement practices and strategies that are student-centered and designed to improve learning.

- Provide a school-wide definition of family engagement with input from administration, staff and families. This facilitates an awareness, which often translates into action to merge student learning with parent involvement. Promote this definition to staff and families at every opportunity much like you would a mission statement, (i.e., school-to-home communications, newsletters, staff meetings, website, etc.).

- Adopt multiple practices that help all parents feel **welcome** to participate in their child's learning as a member of the education team.

- Create explicit, positive school assumptions about the importance of parent contributions to student success, and **communicate** that all parents, regardless of education level, can support student success.

- Give parents specific **information** on their child's academic performance and teach how to interpret this data in the context of overall classroom performance, school benchmarks, and state standards.

- Establish a parent involvement action team comprised of parents, staff, and administrators to implement ongoing strategies for the purpose of motivating parents to **participate** in student learning.

Welcoming

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
Procedures are in place to accommodate parent visits to the school	1.80	Low
School personnel help parents to feel comfortable	2.35	Emerging
Parents' culture and language are respected	1.93	Low
The school is physically attractive	2.00	Low
Overall Score	**2.02**	**Emerging**

Commendations

- Campus is extremely well maintained and the school balances the need for safety with an open-door policy and visitor check-in procedures upon entering the campus.

- Families overwhelming responded that they feel comfortable communicating with their child's teacher and that their culture, ethnicity and religion are respected.

Recommendations

- Display an easily readable campus map and have handouts of the map readily available for families and visitors that help them find their destination/teacher.

- To greet visitors at the school consider displaying welcome signs at the school entrance and/or other visibly prominent locations in language(s) representative of the school population. Welcome signs can also serve as a designation to main entrances to school campus.

- The school parking lot is often a family's/visitor's first impression of the school's climate. Provide directional signs for entrance/exit and flow of traffic within the parking area.

- Clearly designate a few parking spots as "Family/Visitor" parking to reinforce the message that the school welcomes and has a place for visitors.

- Front office staff is every school's calling card. Personnel in these positions are the most visible and crucial in setting forth a welcoming environment. Ensure families/visitors are greeted upon entry to the office and that staff promptly seek to identify how they can be assisted. To provide and maintain quality customer service, administration should regularly communicate specific "customer service expectations" to staff and encourage staff development opportunities in this area.

- While families overwhelmingly felt that their religion, culture and ethnicity were respected and represented, school administration felt they could do a better job addressing this issue on a consistent basis. We recommend hosting a Family Cultural Night, writing a column in the school newsletter on different cultures, ethnicities and religions and creating opportunities for families and students to share their heritage with one another and the entire school community. We also recommend visibly celebrating the school's diversity in the way of posting art, literature, posters, etc., throughout the hallways and common areas of campus.

- The photo here shows that Wiley successfully displays evidence of student work. When looking at the photo, however, it's not clear what the students were working on, how it is connected to the curriculum, which standard it is aligned with, or how parents can talk with their child about the learning that took place. To connect and include families in student achievement, we suggest displaying more direct evidence of learning throughout the campus. It is important

to make the connection between what you've displayed and student learning. When displaying evidence of learning, be intentional and explicit about what you are displaying. This means labeling all work (What it is) and connecting the work back to school learning goals, content standards or a specific assessment. This is the difference between displaying student work and showcasing evidence of learning.

Communication

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
Contact between schools and families is frequent, comfortable, and two-way	2.49	Emerging
Written and oral communication is clear and comprehensible	2.86	High
Meetings and events are scheduled regularly, widely advertised, and well attended	2.00	Emerging
Print information is available, attractive, useful, and family/culturally friendly	2.75	High
Overall Score	**2.53**	**Emerging**

Commendations

- Parents overwhelmingly praise Wiley for their communication practices. Parents indicated on survey responses that they receive positive comments from teachers, can easily reach school personnel when needed and that school personnel respond to parent concerns in a timely manner.

Recommendations

- Consider incorporating the use of a suggestion box or other informal method to solicit family input on procedures, policies, concerns, and/or school achievement progress. Remember the suggestion box can be located in the building as well as a part of the website. In order to promote the importance of parent feedback, remember to pair the use of a suggestion box with an explanation of the school's interest in obtaining parent feedback. Don't forget to provide information to parents on the topics for which the school would like their feedback. Posing specific questions or issues for response in the school newsletter, on the school website or during a parent meeting may serve to encourage parent participation.

- To promote your school's parent/teacher organization, consider creating a bulletin board in the front of the school and on your website to visibly promote these organizations, recruit new members and update families on recent activity. Make sure to label the board as a "PTA/PTO Bulletin Board" so that families know where in the school and where on the website to look for this information. Suggested content for the board may include the following— meeting minutes, upcoming events, membership and contact information. Ensure that material and content is updated on a regular basis.

- When possible, ensure all written communications (flyers, newsletters) are in predominant languages spoken by families and are free of jargon and acronyms.

- Provide a prominent area in the school near the main entrance where parent organizations and school staff may post announcements and upcoming events

- Administration should consistently provide formal and in-formal opportunities to meet with families as possible so they are included in, and aware of school-wide issues.

Information

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
The school provides resources and materials to help families learn about school goals, policies, and procedures	1.54	Low
The school has programs and procedures to inform families about their child's classroom and activities	2.00	Low
Families are kept current on their child's school performance	2.74	Emerging
The school has programs and procedures to involve parents with their child's academic achievement	2.25	Emerging
The school has programs and procedures to inform families about available community assistance	2.89	High
Overall Score	**2.28**	**Emerging**

Commendations

- Educators consistently include families in student learning. Teachers send home student work for parent review and comment, keep families informed about any problems children are having in the classroom, and regularly send home a classroom newsletter or bulletin.

- Educators provide a curriculum outline for families and provide linkages to other resources and services that families may need.

Recommendations

- Consider providing a welcome packet for new families to include a welcome letter from the principal, student handbook, information about instructional programs, information about parent organizations and volunteer opportunities, staff contact information, and specific school highlights such as awards, athletics, community partnerships and school academic performance information. The focus of the welcome packet should be on families and their role in the school and in supporting learning.

- Consider providing a prominent, easy-to-find area of the school where families can access information on school policies and procedures, instructional practices, curriculum information, tutoring assistance, volunteer opportunities and community resources. To inform parents of the availability and location of this information area, identify the area with signage such as "Parent Information Board" and promote it in school newsletters, on the website, and during school events. For families that do not frequent the campus, ensure this information is easily found on the school website and individual teacher web pages. When updating families about new procedures or policies, consider sending those documents home on bright colored paper or utilize social networking options such as Facebook, Twitter or text messaging.

- Display your school mission statement in a prominent area where families and visitors frequent. This helps to communicate the school's goals and fundamental purpose. Incorporate the mission statement in school correspondence and meetings to remind staff, students and families of this commitment.

- To keep parents connected with student learning, consider enhancing or including the following content on your website:

  o Parent Resource section to include information on upcoming events/parent workshops, resources for families (educational and community) and strategies to connect families to student learning.

  o Individual classroom or subject area. To establish consistency among teacher web pages ensure that all teachers, at minimum, post a short bio, include information on yearly student learning objectives, homework assignments, ways for parents to be active participants in their child's education and current newsletters. For accountability, review these pages on a consistent basis.

  o On-line grade review.

  o School Key Term Guide.

  o Curriculum information including a section on standards, assessment and an assessment calendar.

  o School or district newsletter.

  o School location and link to mapping program.

  o Frequently Asked Question section which contains:

    ▪ School office hours and student hours

    ▪ Volunteer opportunities

    ▪ Who to contact in the office

    ▪ What to do if a child will be late or absent

    ▪ Bus information

    ▪ Homework expectations

    ▪ School dress code

    ▪ Behavior expectations/what not to bring to school

    ▪ Enrollment requirements

- Creatively look at ways to designate space on your campus for a Parent Resource Center or area in the school where parents are able to get information on helping their child learn, academic tips, DVD's, access to a computer, or other materials that support student learning. We understand that designating space on campus for a center may be difficult. Consider designating a corner of your media center or front office space to house parent materials and a computer for family or visitor use.

- Parent and educator surveys indicate a need to provide more information to families regarding student learning and ways to provide school support at home. To foster parent partnerships and facilitate two-way conversation regarding student achievement, provide on-site and online opportunities for parents on how to support learning at home. Encourage educators to outline strategies for promoting learning at home on their classroom webpage, in school-home correspondences, and during parent-teacher conferences.

- To facilitate school transitions ensure families are provided opportunities to participate in meetings, activities, and orientations. Have your parent teacher organization work with staff and school administration to organize transition meetings for families that explain school policies and procedures, academic standards, report cards, and specific ways that families can assist with student learning.

Participation

Your Score

Definition	Score	Rating
Individuals and existing documents support parent input and ideas	1.92	Low
Parents and teachers meet and work together	2.22	Emerging
Schools provide parents with education and volunteering options	1.50	Low
Parents are valued as an education community resource	2.21	Emerging
Overall Score	**1.96**	**Low**

Commendations

- Parents feel informed about opportunities through the Parent Teacher organization.

Recommendations

- To strengthen and promote successful parent involvement best practices in your school, provide educators and staff with training opportunities in this area, including training on how to communicate with families.

- Have a plan in place to monitor school/parent initiatives for the purpose of improving school and parent partnerships, including evaluations and/or surveys at parent workshops, events, and meetings.

- Several parents indicated they do not always feel the school is open to parent suggestions. Provide opportunities for frequent 2-way communication, such as morning coffees or other activities to demonstrate partnership. Ensure that when parents do provide suggestions they are informed how or when the recommendation has been addressed. Follow-up and follow-through with families are vital components to the process of acknowledgement and value to families.

- Consider forming a Family Involvement Action Team comprised of parents, staff, administrators and community members to assess, plan and implement on-going strategies for the purpose of increasing parent involvement.

- Survey all parents to find out what their talents are to utilize them as active resources for learning and enhancing the school. Match their talents with extracurricular activities and volunteer opportunities. Invite parents to share their expertise and experience (cultural or technical background) with students. Include the survey in the Welcome Folder.

- To maximize parent participation, involve parents in recruiting others. To cultivate a positive "word of mouth campaign," ensure to create positive relationships with every family member you connect with as they will be sure to spread the news about the wonderful opportunities available at the school.

- Ensure that parents have access to the school Parent Involvement Policy. Post this information on the school website, in the Welcome Folder and in the student handbook. It is important that this document is actively utilized to reinforce Wiley's commitment to engaging families in student learning.

- Look for creative ways to provide educational resources and education to families on school campus (i.e. language, computer, parenting classes, workshops). Establishing partnerships with community organization and Institutions of Higher Education, can assist with accomplishing this.

- To maximize parent participation ensure accommodations for family involvement such as transportation, childcare and translation are always provided. Advertise the availability of these services when promoting events to families.